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MRS. PIOZZI'S

THRALIANA

By

Charles Hughes

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MRS. PIOZZI'S THRALIANA

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MRS. PIOZZI'S THRALIANA

WITH NUMEROUS EXTRACTS
HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED

BY

CHARLES HUGHES

J.P. FOR THE CITY OF MANCHESTER
EDITOR OF 'SHAKESPEARE'S EUROPE, UNPUBLISHED CHAPTERS FROM 'FYNES MORYSON,' 'WILLOBIE HIS AVISA' KNYVETT'S 'THE DEFENCE OF THE REALME, 1596'

Strange that a Woman should write such a book as this; put down every occurrence of her Life, every Emotion of her Heart and call it a 'Thraliana' forsooth—but then I mean to destroy it.

10th December, 1780.

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT AND CO., LTD.

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"MRS. PIOZZI'S THRALIANA."

THERE are two authorities for Dr. Johnson's conversations and especially for his conversations at Streatham who have a claim to be considered by the side of Boswell. These are Miss Burney afterwards Madame D'Arblay, and Mrs. Thrale afterwards Mrs. Piozzi. Yet, I suppose, that Boswell has been read by fifty persons for every reader of Madame D'Arblay's *Diary*, and that Madame D'Arblay has been read by at least fifty for every faithful student who has read Mrs. Piozzi's books or the two Volumes published in 1861 by Mr. Abraham Hayward in which Mrs. Piozzi obtains a full hearing, and in which were first published extracts from "Thraliana." There were two editions of Mr. Hayward's work published in 1861. In the first a large slice of "Thraliana" is inserted *en masse*, and not properly incorporated with the work. It had

evidently been received from Mr. Salusbury son of Piozzi's nephew and owner of the precious MS. just before publication. For the second edition a large addition had been received from Mr. Salusbury containing most intimate and vivid passages, and all these and the preceding instalment of "Thraliana" are incorporated in the first Volume. Without speaking disrespectfully of Hayward's work, which was carried out under great difficulties, it may be said that the contributions of Mr. Salusbury far outweigh in value the rest of the Volumes, as new and authoritative matter interesting to the Johnson-Boswell amateur.

They are absolutely necessary to anyone who wishes to "see Boswell's Johnson steadily and see it whole." Mr. Salusbury told Mr. Hayward that he deemed "Thraliana of too private and delicate a character to be submitted to strangers," and since he supplied those "curious passages" in 1861 no more of it has been published.

Mr. L. B. Seeley was allowed to use Hayward's materials in his *Life of Mrs. Thrale*, and has recognised the importance of the Thraliana extracts.

They have also caused Mrs. Thrale's case with regard to her marriage to be fairly stated by Sir Leslie Stephen in his little book on Johnson in the English Men of Letters Series, and in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Those who have only read Boswell are quite unable to understand Mrs. Thrale's position, and the inevitable unfairness of Boswell with regard to her. The unfairness was inspired not merely by literary jealousy but by a personal grudge to one who had known Johnson longer and more intimately and loved him better. This is only a proof of the sincerity of Boswell and in no respects affects the greatness of his literary genius, which is the main cause of our personal interest in Johnson.

Thirty years ago I collected books relating to Boswell's Johnson and have long looked upon "Thraliana" as one of the few possible sources of fresh human interest about the Johnson circle. It was therefore a great pleasure and surprise to me to have the opportunity of perusing "Thraliana" from end to end. These six folio Volumes substantially bound and lettered "Thraliana" each containing from

250 to 300 pages were commenced on the 15th September 1776 by the following entry :—

"It is many years since Dr. Samuel Johnson advised me to get a little book, and write in it all the Anecdotes which might come to my knowledge, all the Observations which I might make or hear, all the verses never likely to be published and in fine everything which struck me at the time. Mr. Thrale has now treated me with a Repository, and provided it with the pompous title "Thraliana." I must endeavour to fill it with nonsense, new and old."

While Thraliana was at my house it was insured against fire for £5000, nor could I say when I had perused it that the amount was excessive as things go to-day. It is the intimate record of her Life from 1776 to 1809 by the bright and brilliant Lady who was the hostess and caretaker of Johnson for eighteen years, and was the friend of Johnson's friends, Reynolds, Garrick, Burke, Baretti, Burney, Boswell—and whose second marriage with Piozzi was the result of an irresistable passion in no way discreditable to her, and based on mutual affection and esteem. She was in a position to record interesting things, and she

does record them most candidly and faithfully, and used to read and re-read Thraliana to the end of her life. Only three leaves had she cut out, which relate to the time when she broke off with Piozzi and sent him to Italy, but she has frequently annotated and supplemented the record by side-notes which are sometimes of extreme interest.

It is all in a plain bold handwriting that can be read with ease, and a great deal of it has to do with forgotten scandals, about her own relatives and other comparatively unimportant people. These help to make it a faithful reflection of eighteenth century life, but are often unsuitable for publication. When such prodigious prices are paid for a Chinese Vase, a Renaissance Bronze, a Houdon Bust and a rock-crystal biberon, it seems to me that it would be among the less insane of the caprices of millionaires if one who loved Boswell were to pay £5000, £10,000, or £15,000 for the MS. of Mrs. Piozzi's Thraliana. For something absolutely unique, there is no such thing as a market value.

But let "Thraliana" speak for itself, and begin with an entry about Sir Joshua Reynolds and his

sister. "I have fancied lately there was something of this nature (jealousy) between Sir Joshua and Miss Reynolds, he certainly does not love her as one should expect a man to love a sister he has so much reason to be proud of; perhaps she paints too well, or she has learned too much Latin and is a better Scholar than her Brother, and upon reflections I think it must be so, for if he only did not like her as an Inmate why should he not give her a genteel Annuity and let her live where or how she likes. The poor lady is always miserable, always fretful and she seems resolved, nobly enough, not to keep her post by flattery if she cannot keep it by kindness, this is a flight so far beyond my power that I respect her for it, and do love dearly to hear her criticize Sir Joshua's Painting or indeed his Connoisseurship which I think she always does with Justice and Judgment, mingled now and then with a bitterness that diverts one."

It was evidently a pleasure to Mrs. Thrale to hear attacks on the genius of Reynolds, whose "invulnerability" was probably as tedious to her as the virtue of Aristides to the ostracizing Greeks. North-

cote says that nothing made Sir Joshua so mad as Miss Reynold's portraits which were an exact imitation of all his defects. There are few references to Goldsmith, for Thraliana was not begun till two years after Goldsmith's death, but Mrs. Thrale gives the following anecdote at second-hand.

"Mrs. Montague says she was vastly struck with Goldsmith the first time they met; it was at some great Table, I forget what, but Lady Abercorn was there, a Lady of about 76 or 80 years old, and the Company remarking how young she looked were led to mention her age and apply to the Doctor. I am no great Judge says Goldsmith for I never saw an old woman before, except I mean an Applewoman or a Beggarwoman or some such body. Ladies always look young, I think for they are finely dressed up so I can't tell whether this Lady looks well for her age or no, 'tis a new species to me."

A Caricature drawing of Goldsmith by Bunbury is pasted in the first Volume of Thraliana.

The following anecdote recorded in March 1777 must perhaps not be taken as anything but a good

tale: an Oxford satire on the slender examination tests of Eighteenth Century parsons.

"Dr. Parker once told a story of a young Fellow at Oxford who went for Ordination to the famous Martin Benson, and returned rejected and of course looking foolish enough, how is this cried his Tutor, why were you not ordained as we expected? I don't know replied the other, why he asked me some cramp questions which I did not half understand. What questions said the Tutor, why says the Boy he asked me who was the great Mediatour between God and Man! and what was your reply? Why says the young fellow after a moments consideration I named the Archbishop of Canterbury. Blockhead! exclaims the Tutor didn't you know that the Archbishop and Benson have had a Quarrel, if you had named any other Bishop on the Bench, *it would have been done.*"

The Martin Benson of this Story was created Bishop of Gloucester in 1752 and is regarded as one of the most learned and pious of Eighteenth Century Bishops. Many of them had learning, but very few were remarkable for piety.

Readers of Boswell feel very well acquainted with Bennet Langton and his wife the Countess of Rothes, but even the indiscreet Boswell could not write quite so freely for the public as Mrs. Thrale in the privacy of Thraliana. She gives a very amusing description of the wasteful and shiftless ways of Bennet Langton's father and mother which she must have heard from Johnson, and which I omit with some reluctance, and then begins on Langton himself and his wife Lady Rothes.

"This Mr. Langton however was to have repaired the fortune of the family and married a rich Wife, for he is pious, learned and elegant and well qualified to make his addresses to any Lady. To the grief and astonishment of all his true friends they now behold him tied to a thing without Beauty Birth Money or Talents, widow to an old Scotch Peer who wanted a son in his old age and took a fresh lowland lass for that purpose with more Probability than success, She is a Presbyterian too, to make her more fit for Langton who is a Tory and High Churchman up to the Eyes, but that as he observes is a small Fault for says he I shall take her to Church and she will go of

course and not *find out the difference.* She does so, and they seem to live vastly happy as can be, and ask their friends to dine with them, Lords, Ladies, anybody, upon a piece of boiled Beef and a Loin of Veal only without anything else, all this with an insensibility truly admirable.

August 13th 1777. Yesterday I dined at Sir Joshua Reynolds, Richmond Hill some agreeable People were raked together and we intended to have a charming day of it, but Mr. Garrick was sick and Lady Rothes was troublesome. She brought the Babies with her both under six years old, which though the prettiest Babies in the World were not wanted there at all, they played and prattled and suffered nobody to be heard but themselves, we ancient Maids, sterile Wives and disappointed parents were peevish to see others happier than ourselves in a little Boy who, naughty as we called him, three people there would have been glad to purchase with ten thousand pounds—Garrick, Thrale and old Deputy Paterson, who married a second wife on purpose but could not obtain his wish."

It ought to be mentioned to justify Mrs. Thrale's

description of herself as a disappointed parent, that she had lost both her sons by death, and had only daughters living.

As these extracts from Thraliana are given in order of time as they were entered by Mrs. Thrale in her Volumes, they must inevitably appear "scrappy," and they jump from one subject to another, but this gives the same effect as does the actual reading of Thraliana, which is something between a diary and a commonplace book, and is a delightful jumble of family troubles, gossip, scandal, political events, amusing tales, and serious reflections.

I do not remember having seen elsewhere a tale told by Johnson about Garrick when first he appeared as King Richard in London. A rich and noble Lady fell in love with him and sent a go-between to propose marriage, but the proposals dropped and it was only after a year or two that Garrick met the intermediary and discovered the cause.

"Well she said the Truth is the best excuse, I will tell you. My friend fell in love with you playing King Richard but seeing you since in the character of the Lying Valet you looked so

shabby (Pardon me, Sir) that it cured her of her passion."

Mrs. Thrale records a smart saying of her own when she was in Paris at the time of the outbreak of the American Rebellion. She has used it in one of her published works.

"A French Gentleman whose Place was near mine at the Opera asked me in a sneering manner how we should do to conquer America adding that he fancied it would be somewhat difficult. Perhaps so, I replied, now 'tis defended by Englishmen. I remember twas easy enough to take it from the French."

The following description of Mr. Cumberland proves that Sheridan did not overdraw his caricature in Sir Fretful Plagiary in the *Critic*.

"Mr. Cumberland's delicacy is very troublesome, his peevishness very teazing and his envy very hateful, he looks to me like a man that had been poisoned so sallow is his Complexion, and so sunk are his Eyes. Yet his person is Genteel and his Manner elegant but he professes to be easily galled and says of himself that he was born without a skin. Effeminacy is

however an odious quality in the Creature, and when joined with low jealousy actually detestable, he is a man one cannot love." I suppress a rather scandalous note annexed to this passage by Mrs. Piozzi at a later period.

As an introduction to an account of a conversation on Love with Dr. Johnson in which he expressed his usual commonsense and unromantic views, she remarks "As my peace has never been disturbed by the *Soft Passion* so it seldom comes into my head to talk of it."

During this conversation Johnson defended all amusements as combating the *taedium vitae*.—"Cards, dress, dancing all found their advocates in Johnson. Somebody would say—such a Lady never touches a card, how then does she get rid of her time says Johnson does she drink Drams, Such a Person never suffers Gentlemen to buzz in his daughter's Ears,—who is to buzz in her Ears then? The Footman?"

The following tale may be recommended to the members of the Anti-Vivisection Society, and it would be all the more suitable for them as it bears the marks of exaggeration and imagination.

"A Fellow brought his dog to a doctor for dissection, pray friend enquires the Doctor is not that the dog which once saved your life: and have you the cruelty to bring him here to be dissected? Why really answers the Clown, I do believe the poor beast loves me so, that if he *know'd* I should get a Crown by it, he would have come *voluntary*."

Mrs. Thrale has written in these volumes several tales unfit to tell in a mixed company but we must remember that this was a private record, and that she had possibly heard some of these "Smoke Room Stories" from Thrale in private: and then, of course, the Eighteenth Century was not precisely mid-Victorian. She had however her own strong feelings of propriety.

"At a dinner-party at Mr. Deputy Paterson, his wife insisted on reciting some impromptu verses, which her husband had composed at the age of 72 in honour of a reigning beauty—They were repeated with great gravity and in a theatrical tone:—

When Daphne fled Apollo's Arms
And in a Laurel veiled her Charms
His Godship longed to bark her

So do I hate the nuzzling Pride
Of Lace and Gauze that strive to hide
The Charms of Kitty Parker.

(Mrs. Thrale writes out four more stanzas.)

Well! now to be sure these verses are very happy, very Sprightly very clever considering they were run off all impromptu, but they are such verses as I should have thought *no Lady* would have repeated in mixed Company."

Nevertheless Mrs. Thrale must have asked Mrs. Paterson for a copy of "those charming verses" for she would hardly have been able to carry them in her memory from a single hearing.

Mrs. Thrale has written in these pages a long account of her own family, much of which has been published by Hayward, but that gentleman was not entrusted by Mr. Salusbury with the following account of the diarist's own father Mr. John Salusbury of Bachygraig, who seems to have been rather like one of the heroes of Fielding's Novels.

"My father turning out a wild young Fellow with spirit to spend money and earnest desire to give it away wherever it seemed to be wanted, and soon

very little to spend or give, and resolved to come to London and try his Fortune as 'tis called, Here he fell in with a very famous Woman Miss Harriott Edwards who having struck out for herself a new Plan of Happiness resolved to act the Man and the Libertine: She was a Young Person of large and independent Fortune who set Reputation at Naught and Scandal at Defiance, resolved to avoid Marriage, yet have a Son on whom to settle her estate.* She took, as I have been told a fancy to my Father whom she supplied with Money as long as her Taste to his Company subsisted, and when they parted he picked up another female Friend, a Mrs. Stradwicke who being divorced from her Husband led a libertine Life till all her pelf was exhausted: when these resources failed my father, he went abroad as Cicerone to his Relation Sir Robert Cotton of Combermere who paid his expences and was pleased with his Company, the more perhaps as he did not suspect the attachment his own sister Hester had to him and the regular correspondence they had long continued to maintain.

* She would be considered quite a forward Feminist even now.

My Mother became so lovely a creature both in body and mind that her brother Sir Robert grew proud of her and she was always about with him and Lady Betty who introduced her into gay life when she received many advantageous proposals of marriage, she, however, declined accepting any, having secretly set her heart upon her Flashy Cousin John and when her fortune was settled and she became independent, she resolved to bestow it and herself on my Father for whose necessities it was by no means sufficient being only seven Thousand Pounds and an annuity of £125 per annum for the Life of her Mother the Lady Cotton who was no longer young ; and having had two more Children by Captain King seemed to be quite worn out. Well ! my Father durst not return with Sir Robert from France lest this attachment to his sister should be discovered so he stayed at Lyons six months with a French Marquise who died in his Arms and left him the little he had not spent of hers before. (Note. The Goldheaded cane which I gave Mr. Thrale was a Present from that Lady.) With this little money he came home and married Miss Hester Maria Cotton whose brother

Sir Robert Cotton protested he would never see them more."

They lived in Carnarvonshire in poverty and dissention till the daughter became a link between them.

"Rakish men seldom make tender fathers but a man must fondle something and Nature pleads her own cause powerfully when a little Art is likewise used to help it forward. I therefore grew a great favourite it seems, in spite of his long continued efforts to dislike me and now they had a Centre of Unity in this Offspring for which they were both equally interested, they began to agree a little better, I believe, and bear with patience their irrevocable Lot: and now nine years of mutual misery had been endured when Sir Robert Cotton, soured by having no children of his own, and disliking to excess the Lady whom his next brother and immediate heir had chosen began to hear of his once favourite Sister, and made overtures of Peace. During these nine years my Mother had never bought but one new Gown, that cost only one Guinea of a Pedlar that come about the Country, she made her own candles, salted her own meat, ironed her own Linen and her

Husbands and mine, and if he would but have been good-humoured protested she would have been happy."

As a fair account of Mrs. Thrale's Life up to the time of her marriage is given in Hayward's and Seeley's books it will be unnecessary to give any more extracts about her relatives or the circumstances, recorded after fifteen years, of her marriage to Mr. Thrale, a *mariage de Raison* arranged for her by her Mother and Uncle. It was not an unsuitable marriage, but Mrs. Thrale is modest enough to think that one of the chief of her attractions in Mr. Thrale's eyes was her willingness to live much of her life in the house in the Borough near the Southwark Brewery. The house at Streatham was for Thrale rather a suburban than a country house for he was quite determined not to have a "neighbourhood" there, but to depend for Society on friends from London. His old Bachelor friends Murphy, Bodens, Fitzpatrick, Captain Conway, and others were at first the Amis de la Maison. Mrs. Thrale says "I liked none of them but Murphy, and my mother despised them all," but it was Murphy who introduced Johnson and so made the house famous for ever in English Literary History.

At the end of the second Volume of Thraliana, we have a description of Mrs. Thrale's own person and mind, of which I quote the latter.

"The Character of the Mind is however almost wholly Italian [this was written before she was acquainted with Piozzi] or rather Welsh perhaps, for her Temper is warm even to irascibility affectionate and tender but claiming such returns to her tenderness and affection as busy people have no time to pay and coarse people have no pleasure in paying. She is a diligent and active friend who spares neither money nor pains to oblige but is soon disgusted if the person obliged does not express the sense of Obligation, by nature a rancorous and revengeful enemy, but having conquered that Quality by God's Grace she is now apt *really* and *bona fide* to forget when and how she was offended."

At the beginning of Vol. III. on 19 May 1778 she mentions that the black letter title "Thraliana" is written by Sophy Streatfield, but as very full extracts about that fair lady and her flirtations were furnished by Mr. Salusbury to Hayward and printed by him they shall not be quoted here. It is curious however

that she never mentions S. S's strange gift of being able to weep real tears at the word of command as a sort of accomplishment, which furnishes Miss Burney with a life-like descriptive passage.

Here follows a most remarkable tabular character sketch of the society of Streatham, based on a system of marks for different qualities, 20 being full marks.

	Religion.	Morality.	Scholarship.	General Knowledge.	Person and Voice.	Manners.	Wit.	Humour.	Good Humour.
Johnson - - -	20	20	19	20	0	0	15	16	0
Murphy - - -	1	4	15	6	13	15	17	15	15
Dr. Burney - -	18	18	8	15	13	16	0	3	19
Garrick - - -	10	15	3	16	18	17	19	19	0
Seward - - -	0	17	12	14	9	10	18	0	0
Boswell - - -	5	5	5	10	10	8	7	3	19
Bodens - - -	0	0	0	10	6	15	15	15	15
Thrale - - -	18	17	9	9	18	17	0	0	0
Burke - - - -	16	10	14	19	12	14	0	0	0
Sir John Lade -	0	0	0	5	10	9	0	0	0
Baretti - - -	0	6	6	17	4	6	0	5	0
Dr. Beattie - -	18	18	11	7	7	6	0	0	0
Jas. Harris - -	0	10	20	10	5	3	0	0	5
Langton - - -	18	18	17	6	5	5	0	0	0
Cator - - - -	0	0	0	13	3	0	0	0	0

It contains a great deal in a small space, the celebrity of some of the persons and the fact that the marks were given by a keen witted woman who knew them all intimately, gives it a quite unique interest. Some of the names in Thraliana are not given here, among others Sir Joshua Reynolds. The reason that Sir Joshua's character is not quoted is that in his case the columns of Religion and Morality are left blank. This means that as to the Religion, and Morality of the President of the Royal Academy, Mrs. Thrale had not been able to make up her mind. It is clear that she did not like him very much, so that her agnosticism as to his religion and morality may be taken as want of sympathy.

"By Good Humour is meant only the Good Humour necessary to conversation." Mrs. Thrale evidently meant that combination of good humour and good temper which enables people to stand argument, contradiction and chaff without irritation or resentment.

There is another elaborate table which I do not reproduce about the Lady visitors to Streatham, but the headings are different. Mrs. Thrale remarks,

"They must possess virtue in the contracted sense or one would not keep 'em company." One of these virtuous dames, however, she suspects of having had an illegitimate child.

She gives several remarkable tales of Dreams and warnings which she had heard from others and one that happened to herself is striking and impressive, though it is impossible to avoid the criticism that it is not entered in Thraliana till more than two years after the event.

"When I myself was at Lille in Flanders in the year 1775 I walked with Mr. Johnson and Mr. Thrale round the great Church there, and in one of the Chapels I observed myself to stumble in an odd manner so as to give me uncommon Pain, and at the same time to excite strange ideas of Terror wholly unaccountable to me, who am neither timorous nor over delicate: I looked at the Altarpiece and saw it was the figure of an Angel protecting a boy about twelve years old, as it should seem and somehow the child struck me with a Resemblance to my own, and alarmed me in an unusual manner. I prayed for the safety of my young ones and as I came out of the

Chapel I asked an old Man to *whom* that Chapel was dedicated—he replied—to the Guardian Angel of Children. I resolved to walk round the Church and go into every Chapel in it to see if I should stumble in them, I could not stumble, however, but when I returned with better spirits to the Children's Chapel I stumbled again and even hurt myself. The Impression it made alarmed me and as I could not rid myself of the uneasiness it caused, I told Mr. Johnson in the afternoon when Hester was gone to the play with her Papa: he bid me be careful not to encourage such Fancies and talking the thing through cleared my Head of it for a Time, soon after our return from abroad, however, I was dreadfully alarmed by my son's sudden Illness and Death, and though he continued ill but three Hours, this old Superstition haunted me all the while, the more perhaps as I had two days before, going down to dinner with Company, when he was perfectly well at School heard something like a preternatural Voice (that of his Guardian Angel perhaps) call me by my name, but this I never mentioned to anyone, lest I should be suspected of Madness. But Mad I am not.

"I have the best health in the world, no Indigestion, no Headaches, no Vapours: no Change of Weather affects me, nor did even the loss of my only Son lay stronger hold on my Heart than it was utterly impossible to avoid. My mind is an active whirligig mind, which few things can stop to disturb, and if disturbed it soon recovers its Strength and its Activity."

With this we may compare the following entry: which for the sake of the contrast I have taken a little out of its proper order in Thraliana.

"24th September 1779. Friday. I have got a strange Fit of the Horrors upon me today, something runs in my head that I shall die or Mr. Thrale die and that we shall not, as we hoped, communicate at God's Table next Sunday. I will say nothing of it, for it may end in nothing but I am not used to be low-spirited and 'tis very odd to be so now, for I ail nothing though I tremble with Terror just as I was before my Son died! if nothing does happen I will never mind low Spirits again. Monday 4th Oct. 1779. Nothing happened, we did communicate together last Sunday se'nnight and tomorrow

we set out for Tunbridge Wells and Brighthelmstone."

I must now quote a very remarkable passage in which Mrs. Thrale records in 1779 an account of some great passion or scandal in Johnson's Life to which she makes no further reference in the length and breadth of Thraliana.

"It appears to me that no Man can live his Life quite through, without being at *some* period of it under the dominion of *some* Woman, Wife, Mistress or Friend, Pope and Swift were softened by the Smiles of Patty Blount and Stella and our stern philosopher Johnson trusted me about the Years 1767 or 1768, I know not which just now, with a Secret far dearer to him than his Life: such, however, is his nobleness and such his partiality, that I sincerely believe he has never since that Day regretted his Confidence or ever looked with less kind affection on her who had him in her power.

"Uniformly great in the Mind of that incomparable Mortal and well does he contradict the Maxims of Rochefoucault that no man is a hero to his Valet de Chambre. Johnson is more a Hero to me than to

anyone and I have been more to him for intimacy than ever was any Man's Valet de Chambre."

This furnishes a fine problem for the exercise of a constructive imagination. The fact that this confidence of Johnson's, recorded it must be remembered more than ten years after it was given, placed him "in Mrs. Thrale's power" proves that it was not a mere flirtation or love affair but something of which the sage had reason to be ashamed. We must remember that more than ten years elapsed between the death of Johnson's wife and his first acquaintance with either Boswell or the Thrales and that during this period he passed much of his time in deplorable and apparently inexcusable laziness while supposed to be employed in preparing his edition of Shakespeare. Shortly after he became friendly with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale they found him in a state of despondency and despair, that was akin to madness. Still we do not know the name of the woman under whose dominion Johnson passed, and it is very much to the credit of Mrs. Piozzi that we do not know it. Boswell could not possibly have kept it back.

The following passage is interesting as it shews

what a real respect she had for her husband as a politician while having no illusions whatever as to the general character of the Houses of Parliament. The House of Commons at that time was certainly not a collection of ideal men anymore than it is today. Let us hope that today there are wives to be found who believe, each of them, that her own husband is the one honest man in a rotten and accursed Assembly.

Mrs. Thrale writes :—

"If we have deserved Help from Heaven we shall have it, but let us first enquire whether peradventure ten righteous men may be found in the Houses of Parliament, when I say ten righteous Men I mean ten Men free from the vice of the place, [she make a comparison with Sodom] wholly clear from Corruption or bias of any kind or ty'd by any interest for their own sakes or their Friends to any Party whatever. It may for aught I know, be saved for the sake of such *Ten*, but I only know *One* myself and that is Mr. Thrale. 5 July 1779."

I will now present, as Mr. Frohman says, a series of extracts which shew Mrs. Thrale's variety of

subject and variety of tone though all written with equal sincerity (1) concerning Pacchierotti, about whom we hear some scandalous tales in the extracts from Thraliana printed by Hayward. (2) about Mrs. Thrale's efforts in the cause of religion. (3) as to a young admirer at Bath. (4) a comparison between Gray the Poet and Sir Joshua Reynolds the Painter. (5) reflections on a curious MS. of Pope's with moral observations on the amount of artifice in Life.

"(1) Fanny Burney goes home now to study and live recluse and as I tell her to kiss Pacchierotti, The Castrato Singer, of whom they are all so fond. Pacchierotti said one day to me when I told him my Regard was of little value from my Ignorance of Musick. On the Contrary Madam the hard thing is mine for how shall I reward your *Propensity* to me if not by my Talent. *Partiality* said I,—I beg pardon Madam, Propensity—Comical enough and so was a note of his in Answer to an invitation of mine and Miss Burney's for an Evening Visit. I pity myself, says he, that I cannot pass the whole Night between those two Ladies, but I will give them *what I can.*

All this with perfect Innocence of any meaning whatsoever.

(2) If one can mend anybody's Morals or fix anybody's notions of Religion, how happy does it make one; sure it is not mere vanity in me to fancy that I have helped forward the Salvation of my Husband, Mrs. Byron, Mrs. Lambert and Sir P. J. Clerke. My Children's souls are in my care, and all I can do for them is indispensible duty.

Mr. Scrase* is quite unimpressible with any religious notions for I have worked at *him*, but I have often observed, Business disqualifies a man for Heaven more than Pleasure does; The Thorney ground seems to be worse than the Stoney,—and the Faults which a Man applauds in himself he never will be cured of; now the Pleasure-hunter always *condemns himself*, the Business-hunter quite otherwise.

(3) (1780 Bath) I have picked up an agreeable acquaintance here in Lord John Clinton second Son to the Duke of Newcastle; I thought at first he

* Mrs. Piozzi's trusted friend and business adviser, whom she always found worthy of every confidence.

was in love with Hester by his close attention to me, but I believe he was only seized with the present rage young Men have of following *a woman of sense* as they phrase it.—The pretty girls are so empty, no Society pleases me but *a Woman of Sense*, A lucky Folly at least, nor should I call it such but that I conclude it Affectation in this Boy ; However it may be genuine perhaps as he thinks it is :—

(4) Mr. Johnson's criticism of Gray, displeases many people Sir Joshua Reynolds in particular, he professes the Sublime of Painting, I think, with the same Affectation as Gray does in Poetry both of them tame quiet Characters by Nature but forced into Fire by Artifice & Effort ; the time will come when some cool observer will see, or some daring Fellow venture to say, of Sir Joshua's Ugolino all that Johnson has been telling of Gray's Bard.

(5) 10 Dec. 1780. We have got a sort of literary curiosity amongst us : the foul copy of Pope's Homer with all his old intended verses, sketches, emendations &c. strange that a Man should keep such Things [Stranger still that a Woman should write such a Book as this ; put down every occur-

rence of her Life, every Emotion of her Heart and call it Thraliana forsooth, but then I mean to destroy it] All Wood and Wire behind the Scenes sure enough ! one sees that Pope laboured as hard

as if the Stagyrite o'er looked each line,

indeed : and how very little effect those glorious verses at the end of the 8th Book of the *Iliad* have upon me ; when one sees 'em all in their Cradles and Clouts and Light changed for Bright, and then the whole altered again and the line must end with Night and Oh Dear ! thus

Tort'ring one poor Word a thousands Ways,

Johnson says 'tis pleasant to see the progress of such a Mind : true but 'tis a malicious Pleasure such as Men feel when they watch a Woman at her Toilet and

See by Degrees a purer Blush arise

Wood and Wire once more : Wood and Wire."

The following remarks about Edmund Burke the sainted Burke, canonized by Lord Morley, may be read with some surprise and certainly it is rather a shock to hear such startling tales of the comparative sobriety of the gentleman of Wales. Perhaps how-

ever it is wrong to judge the Welsh Country Gentlemen by Peacock's "Headlong Hall" but we cannot dispute that Mrs. Thrale "stayed in the house" at Beaconsfield, and that Burke was Irish. Mrs. Thrale is composing a description & verses for the Portraits by Sir Joshua in the Library at Streatham and when she comes to Burke writes as follows :—

"'Tis now Time to turn over a new Leaf for the great orator Mr. Edmund Burke, who, after I had ran from Gentlemen's House to Gentleman's House all over Wales in the year 1774 was the first man I had ever seen drunk or heard talk obscenely, when I lived with him and his Lady at Beaconsfield among Dirt Cobwebs Pictures and Statues that would not have disgraced the City of Paris itself where Misery and Magnificence reign in all their splendour and in perfect Amity. (Note, Irish Roman Catholics are always like the foreigners somehow, dirty and dressy with all their Clothes hanging as if upon Peg.) That Mrs. Burke drinks as well as her Husband and that their black-a-moor carries Tea about with a cut finger wrapped in Rags

must help to apologise for the severity with which I have treated so very distinguished a Character."

In Mrs. Thrale's Welsh diary published by Mr. Broadley in 1909 the remarks on Burke are much milder.

There is much less detail about dress in Thraliana than we should naturally expect to find, but the following passage shews the natural pleasure felt by Mrs. Thrale at the sensation created by a striking costume and it shews that the Lady was before her age in consideration for the Press.

"My Name has figured finely in the Newspaper on account of my going to Court on the Birthday in the O-Why-Hee Pattern Silk, the Truth is I had a mind partly to please the Burneys, whose Captain brought me some Curiosities from the South Seas and new discovered Regions, particularly a Scrap of Cloth torn from the back of the Indian who killed Capt. Cook with his Club. This stuff I thought so pretty that I got Carr the Mercer to imitate it in Satten; and trimmed it with Feathered Ornaments to keep up the Taste of the Character, still preserving in View the Fashion of the Times. It was violently

admired to be sure, and celebrated in all the Papers of the Day, which I have a notion was owing to my own willingness to be looked at by the people who sat in the Guard Room observing Dresses Fashions &c. My being used to electioneering prevents my Indignation from boyling at the sight of a few honest Fellows collected together which the Ton-Folks call a *Mob* so I turned to them and smiled and I heard them say 'tis *Mrs. Thrale* Oh She's a good natured Lady &c. and so they put me in the News I guess."

Several of her friends are going abroad and she makes the following entry :—

"I catch myself thinking that if my Master was to dye and Queeny to marry ; I would take my two next Girls and give them a little Run upon the Continent before the time of Flirtation should arrive, as School Girls are dangerous Animals enough at 14 or 15 years old. Ignorant of every earthly thing but their Lessons, they are a natural Prey to all who venture the Attack ; and the Fortune of my Monkies will induce attention like the White Feather in Henriquatres Hat on the Day of Battle."

Here follows an extract which shews really affec-

tionate feeling though it is possible that Mrs. Thrale took a pleasure in writing it, for it is very well expressed.

"One page more I see ends the third Volume of Thraliana! strange Farrago as it is of Sense, Nonsense, publick private Follies but chiefly my own, and *I* the little Hero! but who should be the Hero of an "Ana"? let me vindicate my own Vanity if it be with my last Pen. This Volume will be finished at Streatham and left there. . . . My poor little old Aunt at Bath is dying, and I am Dolt enough to be sincerely sorry, the more as her past kindnesses claim that personal attendance from me which Mr. Thrale will not permit me to pay her, poor little, old, insipid, useless Creature! May God Almighty in his Mercy, pity, receive and bless her as a most inoffensive Atom of Humanity, for whom His only Son consented to be crucified and among whose Flock she has most innocently fed for sixty or seventy years.

Here closes the third Volume. Streatham. Monday 29 January 1781."

As this is not a life of Mrs. Thrale, readers may be referred to Boswell, Hayward or Mr. Seeley for

an account of Thrale's death, the appointment of Executors and the sale of the Brewery. The use of Streatham House and the income from £50,000 were left to Mrs. Thrale. Most of the important passages in "Thraliana" in reference to her gradual attachment to Piozzi, her determination to marry him, and then her resolution to send him to Italy and give him up for the sake of her daughters, were communicated to Mr. Hayward by Mr. Salusbury. But the love tale is told in full by Mrs. Thrale and it is only in Thraliana that it can be read in full. Miss Burney was the "confidant" though she was opposed to the Piozzi marriage. She did not approve of Mrs. Thrale marrying a man who was a foreigner and a Roman Catholic but seems to have behaved with sympathy and discretion. It is curious that she should herself have afterwards married M. D'Arblay who was also a foreigner and a Roman Catholic. Mrs. Thrale had left Streatham, which was let to Lord Shelburne, the Prime Minister, and when she gave up Piozzi retired to Bath with her daughters. Her constancy to Piozzi remained unimpaired. They wrote to each other and she frequently sent him

verses which do not seem to have cooled his affection. Early in 1784 her daughters took pity on her. She was very ill and was in truth dying of love for Piozzi, so Miss Thrale wrote to Milan to recall the Amante Adorato from his banishment. During this period she is too much agitated to write much on general topics but the following passage in Thraliana is dated at Bath on March 15th 1784.

"To neglect or forbear the Education of our Children is surely not the fault of the present Age, every Boy is driven into the Lists of Literature where indeed failure is now scarcely a Disgrace, so many and so impotent are the Claimants for Fame. Every Female is harrassed with Masters she disregards, and heaped with Accomplishments which she ought to disdain when she reflects that her Mother only loads her with Allurements as a Rustic lays Birdlime on Twigs to decoy and catch the unwary Traveller: like that too it is often laid on so unskilfully that Man and Bird flies instinctively away, their intention appears so very palpably: yet is Education at last an admirable Thing."

The marriage takes place on July 25th 1784, and

on September 3rd she enters in Thraliana this heart-felt expression of satisfaction—"I have now been six weeks married and enjoyed greater and longer Felicity than I ever yet experienced,—to crown all my dear daughters Susanna and Sophia have spent the Day with myself and my amiable Husband. We part in Peace and Love and Harmony ; and tomorrow I set off for the finest Country in the World in company with the best Man in it."

And so for Italy—leaving behind Johnson, who behaved very badly indeed with reference to her marriage and for whose conduct towards his Benefactress there is no sufficient excuse and hardly any palliation. I give the following extracts from Thraliana about her travels.

"Paris. 23rd. Sept. 1784. The Count Turconi.

A Humpbacked Italian Nobleman who lives always here to enjoy that Liberty which great Cities are sure to afford has offered his House near Milan for us to inhabit, while he studies Life all day and Chemistry all Night among the Parisians. I was diverted with the account of the People he lives with and whom he does not Love "but anything" says he

" is better than Etiquette and Insipidity so I keep clear of Milano at least, and pass my Life in the manner I best like," he seems to esteem me and so indeed do all the Italians, I have yet been introduced to : Goldoni dined here one day and we struck Fire vastly well ; he is such a looking man as the famous James Harris of Salisbury and extremely garrulous ; the Italian talk a great deal but he out talked 'em all.

She hears on the 25th of January of Johnson's death which had been long expected and writes "Oh poor Dr. Johnson" but she is herself very happy. 27th January. Milan. 1785. Here am I ! with my Husband and his Friends passing my Birthday (after all past Anguish) in the Bosom of Friendship, Love and good humour : with my health recovered as far as it was recoverable and even my looks repaired by growing fat, so as to content my ever partial, my ever kind companion, What Blessings, What Comforts are these ! and how grateful ought I to be for a Change so unhoped for, though always eagerly desired.

We have a dinner and a Concert ; and I am fed with flattery even to Repletion : but that of course

which most delights my Heart is the unfeigned Pleasure which I see my Piozzi takes in my Company. God has heard my Prayers and enabled me to make happy the most amiable of his Sex Was I to wish for more, I might provoke Providence to lessen the enjoyments I possess ; let me suppress all inordinate Desire of a Child by the man I so love, that only could add to my happiness.

So passes the happiest Birthday ever yet experienced by Hester Lynch Piozzi."

Though she finds the Italians pleasant and amiable, she is much disgusted with their customs & superstitions and the grossness of their talk.

"I told Piozzi the other day that I thought Senator Morosini's talk was like nothing I ever heard of but a Midwife's evidence in England upon a Tryal in a Court of Justice.

I have always been partial to Peter as elder Brother though I acknowledge him neither for Padre nor Monsignor, but I shall now be a follower of dear Martin as much from preference as from being born and educated where his Heaven-dictated Reformation is the established Church. These

people by treating my notions as Heretical have made me a Protestant in despite of myself, who always used to say that though I dissented from the Roman Church I did not *protest* against it, but when they *profess* to worship *Man* instead of God 'tis Time to protest against such gross Impiety, No. Sir. said I to a Priest the other day you do not pay *divine Honours* either to Saints or to Angels; you respect them. On the contrary Madam replied he, we adore them; and so we do the Pope; and it is heresy to oppose that Adoration.

Here I finished and resolved never to speak to them upon that subject more—Could I but separate my Piozzi from these GOATS!"

Having seen Venice Rome and Naples they return to Milan.

Milan. Casa Fedale. 27 June. 1786.

". . . Such happiness had I once in the Company of dear Dr. Johnson whose knowledge of the World I now find to be nearly intuitive, excepting only that he could never persuade himself to think mankind so wicked as I have since found them to be. The Anecdotes of his Life written by me in various

parts of Italy, begun here in Milan, continued at Florence and finished at Leghorn, met I understand with an extremely favourable Reception in England ; so I ought to be thankful and in good Humour with my own Country now—for every reason. Indeed comparing it with others, one must allow it a gainer tho' vicious enough God knows. . . . Our Beckfords and Bickerstaffs do not keep their Male Mistresses in Triumph like the Roman Priests and Princes.

This Italy is indeed a sink of Sin and whoever lives long in it must be a little tainted. England certainly does keep the Golden Mean and though wickeder than one would wish it and more defective both in Faith and Works I verily do believe it is the best part of Europe to live in for almost every reason.

16 August 1786. Milan.

I have seen a stranger Thing however here at Milan than any critical Studies can afford. Nature and her Varieties are better worth Studying after all than all other Sciences could one acquire them. Dr. Johnson once said nobody ever saw a strange thing ; and Challenged two or three Friends (myself

amongst them) to say I had in my Life been Witness to any Sight justly called a Strange one. But I had not then seen *Avvocato Borghi* a Lawyer of this Town and a man well respected who actually *chews the cud* like an Ox which he did in my presence and at my request. He is eminent for Strength, his Person like that of another Man till stripping, he shews a set of Ribs and a Sternum very surprising indeed and worthy the Inspection of Anatomists. His Body on a slight touch even through his Clothes, throws out Electric Sparks. With all these peculiarities no man has better health, I'm told, and he is eminent for lifting great Weights, holding a Man in the Palm of his Hand and such tricks, he can throw up his Meals at Pleasure and to oblige me did go through all the operations of eating, masticating and vomiting so as to entirely satisfie all curious Enquiries I could make and leave me no doubt of the Fact which I would not have believed from the Relation of any Mortal *now* living. I could hardly have refused credit to Johnson.

The Americans have got a Trick of travelling I find, it is very foolish in their Government to

suffer 'em. They will get spoiled. [The above remark is inserted in Thraliana without preface or comment. Have the Americans been spoiled or improved by Continental travel?] 3rd Sept. 1786. I am exceedingly obliged to the Milanese Nobility for their partial Regard and Tenderness towards me whom they consider as entitled to every Distinction both by my Birth and Acquirements but though they respect my Fidelity to the Man I have married, they scruple not to declare their opinion of its being very ill bestowed: all the Gentlemen loudly proclaim their envy of Mr. Piozzi, and astonishment at his good luck in getting for his wife a *Dama di Nascita* [he was not Cavaliere]. Every man I have seen almost has made Love to me, but when I found how the land lay, a steadily kept Resolution never to sit with *any man alone* even for five minutes, settled that Stuff completely. The Italians are sad Liars, I would not trust *one of them*. These old priests teizing me to change my religion is the worse thing. I am afraid of their making Piozzi hate me, and of their putting a Woman about him to keep him steady in the *Good Old Cause*. Milan. 15th Sept. 1786. Well! I am

now about to close my Residence in Italy at the same Moment as I close my 4th Vol. of Thraliana, and must confess that no Days since I began it have been so happily spent by me as those I have passed in this beautiful country ; where my little Talents have been respected much beyond their Deserts : my Conduct extolled far above its Merit, and my Conversation sought for from the mere Prevalence of true admiration and Esteem. I shall not leave People who deserve so much from me without sincere Desire and fervent Prayers for their future welfare. With regard to my Husband, it is difficult to express how kind and how attentive he has been. May that tenderness not lessen from an idea that when I am once in England I shall need it no longer, ... for to that I shall owe my Life which depends entirely on him and which his Company can alone render pleasing in any Nation and beneath any Sky.

> Here then Farewell Fair Italy say I
> Whilst other Modes and other climes we try."

And so they left Italy where Mrs. Piozzi wrote her little book "Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson LL.D. during the last twenty years of his Life."

She sent the MS. to England for publication by Cadell, and as it was the first book she had published its great success and numerous editions gave her much satisfaction.

The following entry in Thraliana after their return home is made on April 29th 1787 and will explain Mrs. Piozzi's feelings.

"Vienna pleased Mr. Piozzi better than me, he found some musical Houses very much to his Taste but I disliked both the City and People exceedingly. Prague was horrible, Dresden won my Heart, was I sixty years old I should like to settle at Dresden, though Bloomsbury Square and Southampton Row are somewhat nearer to be sure, the Manners very similar, the Society just such I think, More Women than Men, and the Men poor creatures, I made some Friends, Female ones, there who appeared to Love me sincerely. Brunswick, Hanover and Osnaburg form a climax of misery. God keep one from ever seeing those places again. Berlin & Potsdam were *superbly dull.* The Gallery at Dusseldorf is worth running across to look at ; but Aix la Chapelle was a wretched Place and the Spa Baths made one

sick to look at them. Brussells! Ay Brussells was something like indeed: never were people so caressed as Mr. Piozzi and I were at Brussells. The Duke and Duchess of Arenburg quite adored us. Lord & Lady Torrington professed themselves jealous of our fondness for them: The *Princess Governante* invited our further residence in her City and asked me if nothing she could do would induce us to stay? The Arch Duchesses learned English out of my Book (Johnson's Anecdotes) and Prince Albert would not have Mrs Piozzi out of his sight. We entertained sixty four English Friends with a Concert & Supper at the Hotel d'Angleterre, and dined and spent the Evening with the first Company every day, and we left 'em much to my Regret after spending five weeks in Gayety and Good Humour. Why *did* we leave them? I never could tell, certainly but the best reason was the Hope of seeing the Mortgage to Miss Thrales fairly discharged and cancelled, that satisfaction I expect next Thursday. As for seeing our Daughters why we never do see them here, any more than when the Sea parted us, or hardly. The eldest has called twice and we have called twice on Susan

and Sophy who refused dining here at our invitation; perhaps from an Idea that they are superior to the petty sovereigns of Germany."

For twenty-five years Mrs. Piozzi lived in happiness and content with her second husband who died at Brynbella* in 1809. They never went abroad again, no doubt because the French Revolution and the constant warfare which resulted from it were interferences with travelling, and especially with visits to Italy to which Englishmen had been so much inclined from the time of Henry VIII, visits for study and pleasure that seemed almost a necessary part of a polite Education. Suffice it to say, that Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi returned for a time to Streatham and afterwards made their headquarters in Wales on Mrs. Thrale's ancestral estate, and that Mr. Piozzi delighted his wife's heart by being received into the Church of England.

They became very friendly with the Kembles and especially Mrs. Siddons, and I cannot do better than quote a somewhat surprising comparison of Mrs. Siddons and Mrs. Pritchard, especially as Mrs. Piozzi was well aware that Mrs. Pritchard was stupid off

* The villa built by Piozzi on his wife's land near Denbigh.

the stage and knew nothing of the play of Macbeth except her own part.

11 January. 1789. "Kemble is an agreeable Actor, a very sensible and pleasing Man ; I love him and his charming Sister sincerely, but have more sense than to take them for Garrick and Mrs Pritchard Tis a shame even to have them compared Mrs Pritchard was incomparable, her Merit overbore the want of Figure, her intelligence pervaded every Sense. She was the most refined Coquet of Quality in Cibbers Lady Betty, the most vulgar and cunning Jade that Ben Johnson could invent in Doll Common: the loftiest Roman Matron that Shakespeare could conceive in Coriolanus's Mother, the most subtle and artful Millward that Lillo could imagine capable of inducing the young and innocent Prentice Boy, the tenderest the most instinctively tender Parent that Voltaire or his translator Hill could give us in Merope: the softest and most subdued Penitent that Rowe could exhibit in Jane Shore. Dear Siddons represents only a Lover distressed or a Woman of Virtue afflicted, with peculiar Happiness, Elwina, Belvidera, Dianora, Mrs Beverley, Her Powers are

strong and sweet, vigorous and tasteful; but limited and confined. I always thought Pritchard superior to Garrick; he felt her so in one scene in Hamlet, one of Macbeth, and one of the Jealous Wife when all the Spontaneous Applause of the House went to her.

1789 8th May; Mrs Siddons acted Juliet last Night, she does it naturally says some one, so artificially rather said I: but she is a great performer, the parting Scene with old Nurse was the cleverest thing I ever saw, so pretty so babyish so charming. Kemble slept over the parting Scene in Romeo. He is like Bottom the Weaver he likes *The Tyrants! Vein* or *Ercles Vein* or *a Part to tear a Cat in* as Bottom says. I never can keep clear of the idea for my part *A Lover is too condoling* for our friend Kemble, he is a clever man tho' and makes some capital Hits, in many capital characters.

I wonder if my Executors will burn the Thraliana."

Mrs. Siddons is such a very great personage in the world of acting that I will quote some more passages —by no means all—in which Mrs. Piozzi mentions her, for we must remember that they became very intimate.

"17 May. 1790. Charming Siddons has spent some weeks with me, I think mighty well of her Virtues and am amazed at the cultivated State in which I have found her mind. She is a fine creature Body and Soul and has a very distinguished superiority over other Mortals. Poor pretty Siddons. A Warm Heart and a Cold Husband are sad things to contend with but she'll get thro'.

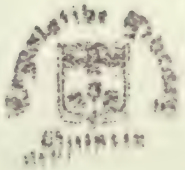
1 March 1791. I think Mrs Siddons tho' beautiful and endowed with Talents not to support only but enrich her family is a Woman by no means particularly beloved either by Parents, Husband, Brother or Son. They all like to get what they can out of her; but all the Affection flows from her to them, not from them to her. I guess not the reason but five thousand Women are better liked by their families."

In 1794 while living at Streatham her youngest daughter Cecilia attracted many admirers, among others Samuel Rogers whose life might have been very different had he married Mrs. Piozzi's daughter. As it was, he became a famous host and literary figure and at one time might be said to be the representative

of Literature in London as Dr. Johnson was fifty years before him. Mrs. Piozzi's entry is :—

" Mr. Rogers has proposed to Cecilia, he seeks not her fortune certainly, but he is too ugly to hope acceptance, who but himself could fancy she would think of him ? Altho' Banker & Poet. She wants neither money nor Verses I suppose and like the Girl in the Comedy would rather have a Husband with white teeth."

It is amusing to find Mrs. Piozzi noting with some annoyance that Rogers gave up visiting them at Streatham after her daughter's marriage, so that it was clear to her that he had only come for the sake of Cecilia and not for the charms of the mother's conversation. There is a great deal about the affairs of Cecilia both before and after her marriage in Thraliana, and of some of it I can quite understand Mr. Salusbury's remark that " it is of too private and delicate character to be submitted to strangers." As for the three elder daughters who lived apart from her from the time of her marriage with Piozzi, there was no real intimacy though the mutual feeling became less unfriendly, as time went on. But Mrs. Piozzi had



no tolerance or patience for anyone who did not appreciate and respect her dear husband. She was not merely a devoted wife, but found her chief happiness in being a devoted wife to the husband who had given her a second existence of exceptional harmony. Murphy who had been the man to introduce Johnson to the Thrale's was the old friend for whom her liking remained unimpaired and with whom she could enjoy a talk about old times.

One passage in Thraliana enables me to make a correction to previous writers. Johnson once made an improvised paraphrase of some Italian verses by Baretti :—

Long may live my lovely Hetty !
  Always young and always pretty,
Always pretty, always young,
  Live my lovely Hetty long !
Always young and always pretty
  Long may live my lovely Hetty.

and both Hayward and Seeley have described these verses as a compliment to Mrs. Thrale. Mrs. Piozzi writes :—

"April 3rd. 1794. Who would dream of poor Dr. Johnsons Verses in Praise of my eldest daughter

when she was ten years old, done to divert Baretti by anglicizing his song at the end of the Baby Dialogues —coming out now set to Music for the misses to sing.

Long may live my lovely Hetty!
Always young and always pretty. &c. &c." *

In justice to Hayward and Seeley we must say that in the " Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson " from which the verses are quoted Mrs. Piozzi does not say in whose honour they were composed. Now that we know, we can easily see, as probably Hayward and Seeley could have done, that internal evidence should have told us at once that they were not meant for Mrs. Thrale.

Boswell was constantly carping at Mrs. Piozzi's accuracy and correcting her in trivial things. It is curious to find that in 1794 he had a great controversy with Miss Seward in reference to some early verses of Johnson's about a Sprig of Myrtle. Strange to say Boswell in this controversy was maintaining the accuracy of Mrs. Piozzi's account of the origin

* Hayward says she made a note for Sir James Fellowes in 1816, " I heard these verses sung at Mrs Thomas's by three voices not three weeks ago."

of these verses. Yet we find this passage in Thraliana.

"Mr. Boswell and Miss Seward are good Antagonists for each other made on purpose one would think, I wonder which will have the last word about poor dear old Johnson's Sprig of Myrtle. Boswell's Cause is best certainly but his opponent out-writes him. Miss Seward has ten times his Power" Boswell had committed the unpardonable sin of writing with want of respect about Piozzi and adopting Johnson's attitude of reprobation about the Piozzi marriage.

Mrs. Piozzi having lived so many years with an Italian Artist and travelled in Italy in his company knew Italian ways as few Englishwomen did, and yet kept her English point of view. The following passages concern matters about which people in the Eighteenth Century wrote more freely than we do, and both of them have a biographical value. The first relates to "Henry IX." the last of the Stuarts, and the second to a Lady artist the wife of a famous painter.

"I might have heard similar stories (to the tales in Suetonius about the Roman Emperors) in Italy all

day, had I not hated lewd Conversations as I do. Old Cardinal de York kept a Catamite publicly at Rome while I was there, tho' a Man of the *best character* possible for Piety and Charity with which as a Person said to me *that Vice has nothing to do.* They consider it as mere matter of Taste.

When Mrs. Cosway ran madding all over Europe after a Castrato leaving her husband and new born baby at Home here ; she was praying at every Altar and fasting vigorously all the time, a hypocritical Hussy say the people. *Not at all.* Her Faith is not influenced by her Actions I suppose : she was well persuaded of Heavenly Truths altho' a Prey to almost infernal passions or Appetites strangely depraved. Her taking the veil at Genoa after all corroborates my opinion of her Piety. Had I been Abbess tho' & known her Character she should not have set her foot in *my* Convent. The Nun's Morality would be endangered by such a Companion. [Side-note of Mrs. Piozzi's] She went *en Pension* She did *not* take the Veil.

Mrs. Piozzi's books "Anecdotes of Johnson" (1786) and "Letters to and from Johnson" (1788)

were both very successful, for the public or rather "Society" interest in Johnson lasted for many years after his death. Her account of her Italian Journey (1789) is lively and brightly written and very much more readable today than most eighteenth century books of Continental Travel. These two Volumes compare very favourably indeed with the four Volumes of Travels by her old enemy Baretti which were so extravagantly over-praised by Johnson and for which Baretti received £500 from the Booksellers. These books were written because Mrs. Piozzi had something to say. She had things to relate which nobody else could know, and she told her story in a headlong lively manner that is a near approach to the familiarity of conversation, and has absolutely no relation to the stiff dignity of Johnson's prose style.

I am glad to notice that Sir Walter Raleigh in his chapter on "Johnson without Boswell" says of Mrs. Piozzi:—"It is impossible to read the Anecdotes without falling under the spell of her easy irresponsible charm" and the essential truth of her picture of Johnson is not vitiated by unimportant errors of

detail brought into an undue prominence by the genius of Boswell. But Mrs. Piozzi's later literary career is not so fortunate. Her "British Synonimy" produced in 1794 and sold by the mediation of Murphy and the repute of her former books for £500 was in no way a success though it was not without some amusing passages.*

As for her last work, she relates in Thraliana that when she came to London in 1801 with the MS. of two folio Volumes "Retrospection, or a Review of the most striking and important Events, Characters, Situations and their Consequences which the last Eighteen Hundred Years have presented to the View of Mankind" she found the publishers quite resolved not to pay for such a book. She was glad to come to terms with Mr. John Stockdale of Piccadilly on the terms that "Stockdale bears me harmless of Expense and then we share the Profits, which will be none." She adds the further remark "My Bargain with Stockdale pleased nobody I think"—My interest in Mrs. Piozzi has induced me to buy these

* I recently picked up a Paris edition, published in 1804 by Parsons and Galignani—which I have not seen noticed elsewhere.

two folio Volumes, and I may say that in the later part of the second Volume her comments on the extraordinary events of her own time have some human and almost historical interest though they are very awkwardly expressed. This is the best I can say of them.

With regard to Thraliana I should like to adopt the phrase of Prof. Raleigh and to say that in the reading of it I have fallen under the spell of Mrs. Piozzi's easy irresponsible charm. The specimens I have given may or may not bring this home to those who have not had the privilege of dipping into Thraliana for themselves and reading in her own handwriting the sincere and private records of a remarkable woman. Sometimes it is so intimate that one feels as if " profaning the mysteries of the Bona Dea" to use a convenient phrase employed by Lord Beaconsfield. The full flavour can only be obtained by a full perusal. It is a veracious document, the real thing, the genuine article. My endeavour has been to give fair samples, not to expurgate unduly, and to try to convey to others the historical, literary and human charm of " Thraliana."

Dates in the Life of Mrs. Piozzi.

1741. Hester Lynch Salusbury born—Jany. 27—daughter of John Salusbury of Bachycraig.

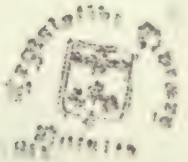
1762. Death of her father.

1763. Her marriage to Henry Thrale brewer of Southwark and Streatham.

1764. Birth of her eldest daughter Hester afterwards Lady Keith. She bore Thrale twelve children in all.

1765. First introduction to Johnson. Thrale M.P. for Southwark.

1766. Johnson became domesticated at Streatham, and spent henceforth much of his time there, usually the middle of the weeks, returning to his London House on Saturday evenings.



1769. Boswell's first visit to Streatham.

1773. Death of Mrs. Thrale's mother.

1774. Tour in Wales of the Thrales and Dr. Johnson. On their return they visit Burke at Beaconsfield.

1775. In September Mr. and Mrs. Thrale with their eldest daughter and Johnson and Baretti visit France. Eight weeks abroad.

1776. Death of the Thrale's eldest son, a boy of ten.

1778. First visit of Fanny Burney (Madam d'Arblay) to Streatham.

1780. Gordon riots. Thrale loses his seat for Streatham. First acquaintance with Piozzi.

1781. Death of Thrale. Sale of the brewery.

1782. Streatham house let to Lord Shelburne.

1783. Piozzi sent to Italy. Mrs. Thrale retires to Bath.

1784. Marriage to Piozzi. Departure of Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi for Italy. Death of Johnson, Dec. 13th.

1787. Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi return to England.

1790. The Piozzis go to live at the old house at Streatham.

1795. They leave Streatham for North Wales to live on Mrs. Piozzi's ancestral estate.

1809. Death of Piozzi.

1821. Death of Mrs. Piozzi in May. She left his Welsh property to Piozzi's nephew who took the name of Salusbury.

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